



## Testimony of Gino Renne On Supplemental Appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget, Montgomery County Government, Department of Transportation, Transit Services

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

On behalf of the 700 members working at Ride-On and represented by UFCW Local 1994, I urge you to pass the County Executive's special appropriation for the transit system.

Montgomery County's Ride-On bus service is short over 100 drivers right now largely due to the salary inequity between Ride-On service and bus service operated by the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA). This disparity is causing Ride-On employees to leave the county for the higher wages offered by WMATA. In fact, 75% of our drivers, who left over the last three (3) years have all gone to WMATA.

Our Ride-On members have always relied on Montgomery County to provide competitive wages and the promise of a dignified retirement, but they can't rely on that anymore. The County has disrupted their sense of employment stability by repeatedly not fully funding collectively bargained wage increases and benefit enhancements.

This special appropriation will go a long way to reestablishing Montgomery County as an employer of choice for transit professionals. Employees would feel valued and respected. Morale will improve. Fewer drivers and other employees would leave service and recruitment would improve.

Public transit can be a great equalizer – we need more people to use mass transit if we want to mitigate the problems of traffic congestion and climate change. The first step to achieving these goals is to stabilize the Ride-On workforce. To do so we need the County Council to fund this special appropriation.

Thank you.

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*Local 1994 represents 8,000 public employees in Montgomery County and beyond. From its inception, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO has fought to protect workers' rights, negotiate fair wages and protect safety and security of workers.*